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Nicaragua Rebels Said to Plan 5,000-Man Offensive

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TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras, June 28 — The anti-Sandinista rebel force based in Honduras is planning to send 5,000 men on a major offensive into Nicaragua, according to one of its leaders.

In an interview Monday, Edgar Chamorro Coronel, a director of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, also said that his organization meets regularly with United States intelligence agents and operates in consultation with the Honduran authorities.

Dr. Chamorro, a political spokesman here for the group, said the offensive was planned for sometime in July. He said that in heavy fighting this month the rebels had engaged regular Nicaraguan forces in hand-to-hand combat for the first time.

Dr. Chamorro confirmed that the Reagan Administration has been working for more than a year to bring the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance, an anti-Government Nicaraguan guerrilla force led by Edén Pastora Gómez, into an alliance with the guerrillas based here. But the effort has not been successful.

Dr. Chamorro indicated that it had been the aim of the United States to merge the two movements ever since Mr. Pastora, a hero of the Nicaraguan revolution who later broke with the Sandinistas, announced his open opposition to them last year.

Last week Mr. Pastora, known as Comandante Zero from his days in the Sandinista revolution against the Government of Anastasio Somoza Debayle, said that he was suspending his fight in southern Nicaragua against his former comrades. He charged that the United States was refusing to aid him as it had aided the Honduras-based rebels and was blocking help from other nations.

Of the attempts to bring the two guerrilla movements together, Mr. Chamorro said: "Pastora met here with the Americans in March of '82. They met over several days — about 100 hours in all — to discuss his future. But Pastora made demands we could not accept. He wanted to be head of the joint chiefs of staff. He wanted us to dress like the Sandinista army, use the Sandinista colors of red and black and sing Sandinista songs."

Dr. Chamorro said that Mr. Pastora

— whom he described as "an idealistic, crazy, courageous man with an uncontrollable mouth" — made the "mistake" of disclosing publicly that he had talked with the United States Central Intelligence Agency and with Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez, head of the Honduran armed forces. At that point the United States was attempting to keep covert its support for an anti-Sandinista rebellion.

Mr. Pastora then went to Costa Rica and announced his opposition to an alliance with the Nicaraguan Democratic Force because of its association with General Somoza's National Guard.

'You Could Clean Us Up'

"We told him, we need you," Dr. Chamorro said, "we need your credibility. You could clean us up. He called himself an exorcist and said he would make saints of us."

But even if an accord had been reached, Dr. Chamorro said, his organization did not want to give Mr. Pastora control over the day-to-day conduct of the fighting, fearing that "people like Pastora do not have the willpower to fight a sustained war — they are more of stunt act, like taking the National Palace." Mr. Pastora stormed the National Palace in Managua in the summer of 1978, making himself a folk hero in Nicaragua.

Dr. Chamorro acknowledged that the general command of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force was still composed primarily of former members of the Somoza National Guard, a situation Mr. Pastora would not accept. The group has recently added a civilian to its command "to get rid of the Somocista image," Dr. Chamorro said.

The group's leaders say that most of the men in its lower ranks were never members of Somoza's National Guard. Rather, they say, these men joined the force within the last two years because of discontent with the Sandinista Government.

Limited Aims of Rebels

Dr. Chamorro, whose family is living in Miami, where he fled from Nicaragua in 1979, said the rebels had limited aims. "Ten thousand men cannot seriously expect to overthrow the Sandinistas," he said. He said their aim was to weaken the leadership in Managua and open it up to a broader base of support.

Dr. Chamorro said that the rebels' plan had been to coordinate a three-pronged attack on Nicaraguan territory, with his group fighting in the north, a Miskito Indian force "liberating" the area around Bluefields, a port on Nicaragua's east coast, and Mr. Pastora's force marching to meet the Indians from its base near the Costa Rican border. "We wanted to put pressure on the Sandinistas from all sides," he said.

These plans have now been set back by Mr. Pastora's decision to withdraw. Reliable information on the activities of the Indians and their organization, called the Misura, is hard to obtain here.

Dr. Chamorro, describing recent fighting in the Jalapa Valley of Nicaragua, where he says the Nicaraguan Democratic Force twice took the Nicaraguan border town of El Porvenir, disclosed that the rebels were being advised by Hondurans whom he would not describe beyond "people who care about us." He said that the Hondurans, with a thinly scattered army along the border, had given the rebels bad advice in asking them in late May to withdraw from the Nicaraguan valley.

When the rebels agreed to pull back, Dr. Chamorro said, the Nicaraguans moved in and dug trenches and built tunnels in the style of a European land war. "We had to go back in and take them out," Dr. Chamorro said. Last week a spokesman for the United States Embassy said, however, that the Nicaraguans "seem to be in control of the whole border area."

Honduras has denied that it is supporting the rebels or that they operate from Honduran territory. But a Honduran politician said that General Alvarez, the armed forces' chief, had told members of the Honduran National Congress at a closed-door briefing that in the war against Communism "Honduras cannot be neutral."